

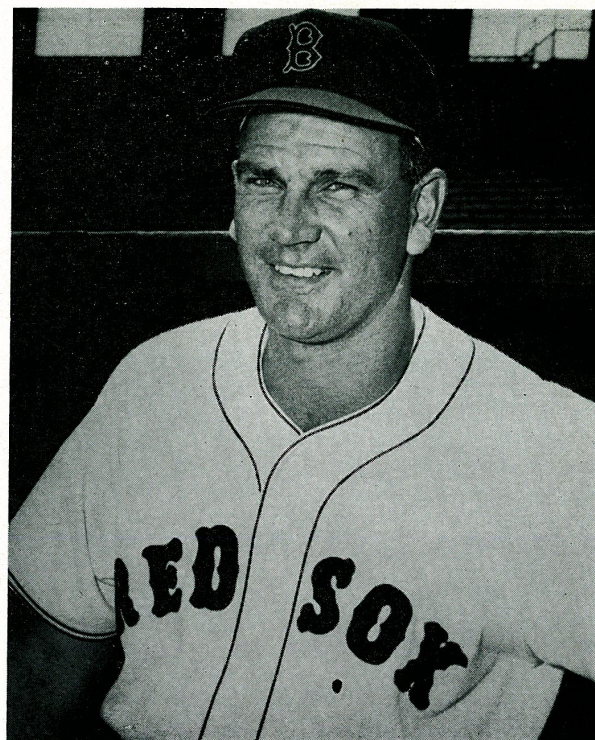
Ferriss 1

Famous Mississippians

number 4 of a series:

David "Boo" Ferriss

*Pitching Coach Of
The Boston Red Sox*



Thanks, Coach!

IN MAY 1939 the Shaw and Benoit high school baseball teams met for the third consecutive year to decide the county championship. In the first game Benoit knocked me out of the box in the third inning and won easily. Two days later I pitched the entire game and we won to even the series. With only one day's rest, everyone was expecting me to pitch the third and deciding game, but they were surprised and could hardly believe it when the Shaw coach announced that I would not pitch this game.

He was soundly criticized, but stood firm by his decision. He said he thought I had a good chance of playing professional baseball and he wasn't going to take any chances on ruining my career just to win a ball game. Fortunately, rain postponed the game for two days and with sufficient rest I pitched and won the deciding game.

Such a decision as this was typical in the life of that coach—James Flack of Crosby, Mississippi—one of the most outstanding students and athletes ever to graduate at Delta State College. He was brought to Shaw in 1935 by Frank Hough,

the highly respected Superintendent of the Shaw School for now more than 30 years, and a man to whom I owe much.

Soon after coming to Shaw, James Flack gained the respect and admiration of the entire student body, and in his four years there as an English teacher and head coach he made a lasting impression, not only on the students, but on the people of the town and community as well. He was outstanding in his field and was a man of good character and high morals. He was not just interested in us for what we could do on the athletic field, but he was interested in us as individuals and our individual needs. He was a builder of good athletic teams, but a greater builder of boys.

I was fortunate in having many fine teachers throughout my school days, but James Flack had more influence on my life than anyone. He taught me a lot of baseball, encouraging me in my burning ambition to be a professional player and practicing endless hours with me. He also taught me a lot about the great game of life. I shall never

Ferriss 2

mium were reduced only \$5 per year).

★ The departments of education in all but a few of our states have set up minimum standards for the teacher training courses as well as the high school courses. Mississippi, along with the majority of the states, allows one-half unit of credit for the semester course. Standards for equipment and teaching materials leave much to be desired but attention to these items is inevitable. It is now all but universal that the teacher of driver education in the United States must have a professional teacher's license, have had one or more specialized courses on the college level including behind-the-wheel teaching techniques, and be recognized as a skilled driver.

The college professor or specialist who trains the high school teachers in many of the states must have had a certain number of years experience in the field, have had one or more advanced courses in addition to the basic course and have the special approval of the state driver education committee. (In the summer of 1955 one of our most populous states re-evaluated its teacher training institutions and withdrew recognition from three-fourths of them for either lack of equipment or qualified personnel.)

★ Within the very recent past a few of the larger foundations granted funds directly to schools to assist in accelerating and improving driver education. Mississippi State College now receives an annual grant from the Allstate Foundation which is used largely to pay the fees and living expenses of teachers who wish to qualify to conduct a driver education program in their local high school. One of the major oil companies last year made a similar grant to about five different colleges and universities.

The Three E's

The three E's and Legislation go hand in hand. The three "E's" of safety man are: Enforcement, Engineering and Education. Some people say that all we need do to stop the slaughter on our streets and highways is hire more officers and have them enforce the traffic laws to the limit. Others say we can solve the problem by building

wider, straighter, smoother roadways, which are well-marked by traffic engineers. Still others say we need, most of all, legislation requiring periodic inspection of motor vehicles, re-examination of drivers every four years and more teeth in the speed laws.



"Drunk and doing eighty. Never mind the ambulance. Send a basket."

Some others say that the best results can be attained by educating beginning drivers to know as much as possible about the automobile, to teach him skills, in handling the machine, to instill in him safe habits in traffic, and spend enough time with him to affect his attitudes as a citizen living in a nation on wheels. (Safety education is not limited to the schools, but encompasses the excellent work that can be done through the press, radio and television.)

It goes without saying that Enforcement, Engineering, Education and Legislation are all necessary to traffic survival, but the enviable position of education is this: Its very essence is to sell humanity on the need for the other three.

Needs In Mississippi

A plan for coordinating driver education is a paramount need in Mississippi. The realization of this need is not new. It has been in the minds of top administrators of the State Department of Education for several months. There are many

plans in operation in other states. I am most familiar with those in Indiana, Ohio and Texas where I have had a small part in developing them.

Recognizing that there are too many alternatives to be covered in this treatise, the following seem practical for developing driver education further in Mississippi:

1. Creation of a State Driver Education committee, made up of:

- a. representatives of the AAA
- b. representatives of the Oil Dealers Association
- c. one or more college professors who train the high school teachers.
- d. one or more high school driver education teachers.
- e. one or more public school administrators
- f. one or more representatives of the State P. T. A.
- g. representatives of the Insurance Association
- h. representatives of the State Highway Patrol.

2. Employment of a State Director of Driver Education (Public School Safety Supervisor) to promote, supervise, and service the statewide program. The nomination of this individual could well be left to the Driver Education Committee, as is done elsewhere. He should be a licensed teacher who has had both basic and advanced courses in Driver Education and have had at least five years of teaching experience in the field, one year of which must have been as a Driver Education teacher-trainer.

3. Ask the Legislature to authorize collection of one dollar extra for each original driver's license sold in Mississippi, earmarking the proceeds to subsidize the behind-the-wheel training in the high schools.

4. Require all teachers planning to teach Driver Education to pass a basic two or three semester hour course. In order to remain on the qualified list, take an additional course in traffic or other phase of safety, or attend each year a special workshop set up by the State Director of Driver Education.

5. Continue all driver education courses in the high schools as optional, but require those taking be-

(Continued, page 29)

Ferriss 3

forget his telling me, "Boo, you get out of anything you do in life just what you put into it." Those words have stayed with me through the years, and I have found them to be true.

I, along with many of my former teammates and classmates, am still feeling the influence of this outstanding teacher and coach. Today in our

schools we need more men like James Flack to guide and direct our young people.

Good to say our paths still cross, for today James Flack is an outstanding textile executive serving as vice-president in charge of manufacturing of Indian Head Mills, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

BOO FERRISS

(As told by his number one fan, Frank Hough, Superintendent of Shaw Public Schools)

This great baseball star was born the year that I became Superintendent at Shaw, and I have known him and his splendid family down through the years. When he was just a toddler he called his older brother, "Boo"—unable to say "Brother"—and for years everyone called them "Big Boo" and "Little Boo." That's how the famous nickname originated.

Boo's father, W. D. Ferriss, who died in 1943, was a one time semi-pro player, and it was he who first passed on the love of baseball to his son. I was on hand to see Boo play his first baseball game when he was 12 years old and in the seventh grade. He played infielder until the 10th grade when our Athletic Director, James Flack, had a hunch that with his long arms and accurate throwing, he'd be a pitching prospect. Almost at once he became the terror of Delta high school baseball, pitching the Shaw teams to the Bolivar county and Delta titles in 1938 and 1939.

At Shaw he was also an outstanding performer in football, basket ball, and tennis and was president of his graduating class. He was, indeed, the embodiment of the Shaw school motto, "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano."

After three years of baseball at Mississippi State, he spent the summer of 1941 in a semi-pro league in New England, the Northern League, where he caught the attention of Red Sox scouts, followed by his first professional experience in 1942 when he pitched for Greensboro, North Carolina, and his club won the pennant in the Piedmont League.

He was now the property of the Boston Red Sox and after 27 months in the Air Corps, he reported in the spring of 1945 to Louisville of the American Association, a Red Sox farm. In three weeks and before pitching a game in the Association, he was called to the Boston Club which was in a losing streak, and the rest of his career is baseball history.

Breaks Record

The amazing summer of 1945 he won eight straight games before losing one, tying a rookie record set by Whitehead with the White Sox a few years previously. He made a world's record when he defeated the seven other teams of the American League the first time he faced them. He wound up the season with 21 games won and 10 lost. Boo was named both Rookie of the Year and Player of the Year by "Baseball Magazine" and was selected one of the pitchers on all of the All American baseball teams picked by the experts.

During 1945-46, he tied a Big League record in winning 46 games while losing only 16. In the 1946 World Series he shut out the St. Louis Cardinals in one game, 4-0. He continued with the Red Sox in spite of a pulled tendon in his arm, so highly did the Red Sox bosses regard him. His last noteworthy accomplishment as a player with Boston was his holding the redoubtable New York Yankees score-

less in the final three innings of the last game of the 1948 season, enabling the Red Sox to tie the Cleveland Indians for the American League pennant.

Last winter when Mike Higgins, Boo's manager at the Birmingham and Louisville Red Sox farm clubs, was appointed Red Sox Manager, Boo was made Pitching Coach.

His Popularity

Not only was Boo Ferriss acclaimed for his prowess on the diamond, but he was also admired for his personality and character. Sports writers, teammates, umpires, and even opposing players all liked him. Boston baseball writers, cynical as they might be, went for him in a big way. One American League umpire said, "I have worked the plate in several of Ferriss' games, and I never got a thing from him but a grin."

Said Manager Cronin of the Red Sox, "He has a good, fast ball, a fine curve, uncanny control, and—thank God—a good disposition!" Boo has always taken pride in his condition. High school teammates and coaches will tell you that he never broke training rules. Neither liquor nor tobacco has ever appealed to him, and he's almost made a fetish of health and physical fitness. He owes his position in the Red Sox organization to his character, as well as to his baseball talent.

Boo is married to the former Miriam Izard, one time member of the Shaw faculty, and they have two children. He makes his home at Shaw where his mother, brother, and two aunts also live. This is the fourth winter that he has served as associate secretary of the State YMCA in charge of Hi-Y clubs in north Mississippi. No finer person could have been secured for such work. He was a splendid youngster in school days . . . I kept in touch with him through his 27 months with the Air Force . . . watched him become a glittering star in the American League . . . he's a grand guy today. He's still Boo Ferriss!



Ferriss 4

A MAJOR occupational hazard of teaching (but not teaching, alone) is the persistence with which an emotional condition characterized by almost habitual complaining seems to spread itself among our members. For want of a better term, it might be called the "Chronic Complaint."

It should be repeated that Chronic Complaint is not a condition found among teachers, alone. Office forces in almost any business spend a good deal of their time griping about the boss, the pay, the conditions of work. Even the boss gripes, often in turn about employees, high taxes, or long hours of work. Doctors gripe, lawyers enter complaints, perhaps even a few clergy whisper a prayer or two about injustices that make heavier the burdens of their work.

But here because we are concerned with teachers — important people in close association with children who are busy growing up in the likenesses of those they admire and respect — these remarks are directed toward those who educate.

Typically the habitual complainer greets the dawn with "Another Day!" These words can signify how happy one is to be alive, but in the case of this individual they are more apt to imply that anticipated horrible events are too much to face. From this beginning our representative case-study moves along his or her griping way. The eggs are too well done, the car is cold, the school yard "certainly looks like a dump!" To our sick friend there is no reason why teachers have to come to school 30 minutes before "the brats" arrive; the custodian never sweeps in the corners and the principal always has that silly smile on his face. We teachers better get together, too, and see about higher salaries before the next depression sets in — which will be soon.

And So On Through the Day

"If those supplies don't come today I am going straight to the superintendent." As for those cumulative records, why bother with them? No one ever looks at them again, anyway. So on through the day he bemoans his fate until sleep mercifully closes out the sights and sounds of living with people. (And

it might be added, mercifully closes out the sights and sounds of our griping friend from his associates.)

How can we prevent this attitude-illness, or if we have caught the disease what can we do as remedy? It is important that we do prevent it, of course, both from the viewpoint of our own satisfactions and from the viewpoint of others who live and work with us. To the chronic griper the world must, indeed, be an unhappy place. To those who are forced to associate with him — and few will do so voluntarily — he decreases their enjoyment in living to the extent that they take seriously what he has to say.

It Spreads Like a Disease

As for the effect he may have on his school and the children whose lives he touches, there can be little doubt that the chronic complainer's influence spreads far beyond the face-to-face contact he has with pupils or colleagues. Confined to those situations unwholesome effects of his viewpoints are bad enough but like some insidious disease his ideas spread unrest until an entire faculty can be made discontent and ineffectual.

Chronic complaining can be said to be a nervous habit, somewhat like cracking one's knuckles, swinging a watch chain, stuttering, or wearing a perpetual frown. Only it is more serious, often more deep-seated, likely to be more difficult to remedy.

As with any emotional or nervous condition, what is observed is only the exterior manifestation of what is going on within the nervous system and body of the individual. Something inside is causing problems which show themselves through some of the simple habits described above, or in the more complicated conditions of perpetual complaining, stuttering or other forms of anxiety. Conflicts between aspirations and achievement; frustrations growing out of those conflicts; boredom and distaste for one's lot in life; feelings of inferiority and the like may contribute to the formation of habits that typify the chronic complainer.

Continued griping is, then, a symptom of something deeper, and by rights its correction should be brought about by clearing up the fundamental cause involved, if pos-

sible, but often it is not possible. For example, it would not be too far-fetched to imagine an individual who had always wanted to be a physician but because of financial difficulties was forced to settle for teaching as a profession. Further than this, supposing the same person discovers that promotion has not come as rapidly as he would desire. These fundamental disappointments combine, and the consequence is the "Chronic Complaint."

The happiest solution would be for the teacher to secure the money that would enable him to become a physician, or in lieu of that, somehow at least to gain promotion. Obviously, such things seldom happen outside of Horatio Alger strive-and-success stories. Because the world is real and sometimes unmanageable, our perpetual griper must continue to gripe unless something else can be done for

BY ROBERT F. TOPP
*Dean of the Graduate School
National College of Education
Evanston, Illinois*

Are

him.

When the realities of life cannot be changed; when we cannot become doctors or get married, be rich, or be the boss, or accomplish whatever our goal may be, there remains only the possibility of gaining a degree of insight that will enable us to make the necessary adjustments — to make peace between ourselves and our way of living. Through insight, the recognition of the reasons for some of our maladaptations, we may be able to make changes in our way of living, in our behavior, or in our attitudes that will lead to greater satisfactions for ourselves and more enjoyment to friends and colleagues who associate with us.

When dissatisfactions seem to be within the work we are doing — when we are unhappy and leave no doubt about the matter — the only solution may be to find another kind of work. If this is actually the cause and the unhappiness is not